



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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USDA SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENT ON DEREGULATION OF GENETICALLY ENGINEERED PAPAYA

WASHINGTON Aug. 29, 2008--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is seeking public comment on a petition to deregulate a papaya genetically engineered (GE) to be resistant to papaya ringspot virus. APHIS has regulated the papaya through its notification process since 1999.

The petition for deregulation, submitted by the University of Florida, is in accordance with APHIS' regulations concerning the introduction of GE organisms and products. APHIS has prepared a draft environmental assessment (EA), for review and comment, based on the information provided by the University of Florida. The scientific evidence indicates that there are no environmental, human health or food safety concerns associated with the papaya.

APHIS makes a determination of nonregulated status only when it can conclude that the organism does not pose a plant pest risk. If APHIS grants the University of Florida's petition for deregulation, the papaya and its progeny would no longer be regulated articles. The product could then be freely moved and planted without the requirement of permits or other regulatory oversight by APHIS.

APHIS is responsible for protecting U.S. agriculture and the environment from animal and plant pests. APHIS regulates GE products in cooperation with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In addition to APHIS review, the University of Florida has submitted the appropriate documents to both EPA and FDA to address the regulations specific to their agency.

APHIS has safely regulated GE organisms since 1986 and has overseen the deregulation of more than 70 products.

This action is scheduled for publication in the Sept. 2 *Federal Register*. APHIS is seeking comment on the petition and on the EA.

Consideration will be given to comments received on or before Nov. 3. Send two copies of postal mail or commercial delivery comments to Docket No. APHIS-2008-0054, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. If you wish to submit a comment using the Internet, go to the Federal eRulemaking portal at <http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=APHIS-2008-0054>; then click on "Add Comments." This will also allow you to view public comments and related materials available electronically.

Comments are posted on the Regulations.gov Web site and may also be reviewed at USDA, Room 1141, South Building, 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. To facilitate entry into the comment reading room, please call (202) 690-2817.

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